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SUBJECT: ENTICED BY AFRICA'S MANIFOLD RICHES, AMERICANS AND CHINESE
SEEK TO WORK TOGETHER TO HELP THE CONTINENT DEVELOP

(U) This cable is Sensitive But Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: About 30 government, academic and business leaders -- including several former senior State Department officials -- held a groundbreaking dialogue to explore how China and the U.S. could work with Africa to spur development on the continent. Discussions centered on energy, trade and investment, conflict resolution and good governance. Some areas of shared interest, such as promoting peace and stability, were identified, yet so too were a number of hurdles to meaningful collaboration. These included the need for greater clarity from Africa in defining its priorities and the often stark differences between Chinese and U.S. foreign-policy principles. The group plans two more meetings next year to flesh out its as-yet amorphous ideas and to issue a report. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Africa-China-U.S. Dialogue held at a private resort in South Africa from August 4-6 was organized by three think tanks -- the Council on Foreign Relations, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and South Africa-based The Brenthurst Foundation -- to spur discussion on how Africa could benefit from collaboration with the two global powers that many believe loom largest in the continent's future. The timing of this first of three planned meetings comes amid growing global interest in Africa's oil and other natural resources, particularly from China.

¶3. (U) Among U.S. participants were several former State Department officials: Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1981-89; Princeton Lyman, former Ambassador to South Africa and Nigeria; Thomas Pickering, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; former U.S. Ambassador to China J. Stapleton Roy; and Witney Schneidman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during the Clinton Administration. China's delegation was split between officials from its embassy in Pretoria and CASS academics, while participating Africans included businessmen, academics, Botswana's Minister of Trade and Industry and the King of Lesotho. There were no government representatives from the continent's two sub-Saharan powerhouses of South Africa and Nigeria.

¶4. (SBU) Participants quickly agreed with virtually no discussion that no strategic conflict existed between the U.S. and China in Africa despite the scramble for oil and other natural resources, thereby making collaboration possible. Yet despite a few broad-themed presentations and comments by African delegates outlining their views of the continent's priorities, several participants said at the end of the conference they remained uncertain what Africa really wants from the two powers. Roy, who chaired the meeting's closing session, said he had "no clear sense" of what Africa desired, while Pickering acknowledged he found it hard "to crystallize African views."

15. (SBU) Perhaps an even greater hurdle to effective collaboration was the wide divergence between China's traditional foreign-policy principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, which often is seen in the West as a cover for dealing with corrupt or rogue regimes, and U.S. promotion of good governance and democracy. China's non-interference policy was robustly defended by Minister Counselor Zhou Yuxiao, the top diplomat at the Chinese Embassy in Pretoria, despite American and African participants' insistence that the policy runs counter to broad African support for democracy. One African delegate suggested the U.S. and China work together to promote democratic reform, which left others puzzling over what role China might play given its own lack of experience with and enthusiasm for elections.

16. (SBU) Despite these obstacles, some possible areas of collaboration were discussed. Several Americans suggested a pan-Africa version of the Sullivan principles, which were drafted to ensure that U.S. corporate behavior in South Africa during apartheid supported economic, social and political justice. They also argued that China and the U.S. should work together to bring peace to Sudan. The Chinese delegates neither explicitly endorsed nor ruled out such proposals. Yu Yongding, an influential CASS academic, said that China should change its non-interference principle to provide leeway for action to, for example, respond to genocide.

17. (SBU) Zhou suggested that the U.S. and China could work together on country-specific development projects such as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) and its Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), South African government programs in which he said China planned to invest \$20 million. He said China and the U.S. also could work through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), while Yu expressed support for collaboration through the United Nations and the African Union.

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18. (SBU) Comment: Inevitably discussions at this first of three meetings focused on generalities and on participants' exploring where coordinated action to help Africa development might work and where it would be impracticable. If the group is to have any impact, it will have to devote the next two meetings to developing concrete proposals for governments to consider. In addition to thinking about how the two powers could work together on intractable issues such as the Sudan crisis, where the prospects of meaningful collaboration are uncertain at best, the group also should focus on how the U.S. and China can cooperate in areas where both already are actively assisting Africa, such as health, agriculture and infrastructure. Ambassador Lyman, for one, wants to focus on these areas at subsequent meetings.

19. (SBU) Comment continued: China, with its inclusion of three Pretoria-based diplomats in the South Africa meeting, clearly has signaled its interest in the dialogue. In the subsequent two meetings, the State Department also should ensure it has appropriate representation - perhaps the Ambassador and/or one or two diplomats from Embassy Beijing's political section at the China meeting and representatives from the Africa Bureau at the Washington meeting. Even if the dialogue does not meet its ambitious goal of drafting a workable blueprint for U.S.-China collaboration to help Africa develop, such participation can provide a valuable window into China's thinking on its role in the continent's future. End Comment.

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